

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method of conducting a wagering game, comprising:  
receiving a wager from a player to play the game;  
accumulating bonus points based on predetermined criteria; and  
5 allowing the player to redeem a number of the bonus points for an award at a  
time selected by the player.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the allowing step includes allowing the player  
to redeem the number of the bonus points for one of a plurality of possible player-  
10 selectable options.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the plurality of possible options include a  
plurality of bonus game features worth different numbers of the bonus points such that  
the different numbers of the bonus points are redeemed to play the respective bonus  
15 game features.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the bonus game features are interactive.
5. The method of claim 2, wherein the plurality of possible options include a  
20 credit amount and a bonus game feature such that the player can elect to redeem the  
number of the bonus points for either the credit amount or the bonus game feature.
6. The method of claim 2, wherein the plurality of possible options include a  
fixed credit amount and a bonus game feature for yielding a random credit amount.  
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7. The method of claim 6, wherein the bonus game feature includes a plurality of  
player-selectable elements.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the allowing step includes allowing the player  
30 to redeem the number of the bonus points during any game play cycle defined as  
starting with the wager and ending with a succeeding wager triggering another play of  
the game.

9. A gaming machine for conducting a wagering game, comprising:  
a value input device for receiving a wager from a player to play the game; and  
a processor operative to  
accumulate bonus points based on predetermined criteria; and  
5 allow the player to redeem a number of the bonus points for an award  
at a time selected by the player.
10. The machine of claim 9, wherein the processor is operative to allow the player  
to redeem the number of the bonus points for one of a plurality of possible player-  
10 selectable options.
11. The machine of claim 10, wherein the plurality of possible options include a  
plurality of bonus game features worth different numbers of the bonus points such that  
the different numbers of the bonus points are redeemed to play the respective bonus  
15 game features.
12. The machine of claim 11, wherein the bonus game features are interactive.
13. The machine of claim 10, wherein the plurality of possible options include a  
20 credit amount and a bonus game feature such that the player can elect to redeem the  
number of the bonus points for either the credit amount or the bonus game feature.
14. The machine of claim 10, wherein the plurality of possible options include a  
fixed credit amount and a bonus game feature for yielding a random credit amount.  
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15. The machine of claim 14, wherein the bonus game feature includes a plurality  
of player-selectable elements.
16. The machine of claim 9, wherein the processor is operative to allow the player  
30 to redeem the number of the bonus points during any game play cycle defined as  
starting with the wager and ending with a succeeding wager triggering another play of  
the game.